

factor's daughter, or something of the sort; bah! luckily I left before I met her."

"Still how do you know but what you might have been smitten——."

"Exactly. I saw her miniature in my aunt's best Sunday brooch and was *not* smitten. What d'ye think of that, sir."

"Humph!" Pause.

"What's old Sturge," said I.

"Dunno. I don't ask inquisitive questions."

"But in common sense——."

"Well, he's something or other of a merchant, has an office in the city, does a little on the Stock Exchange, is always talking about Russian affairs, so I suppose he has some investments——."

"Russia!"

"Eh! what's the matter?"

I stopped short, and he turned and looked at me. Putting my arm in his, I said quietly, "Young man, now don't be alarmed, but did you ever learn Geography when you went to Rusleton Grammar School?"

"Why, what in the name of fortune do you mean?"

"Simply this, did you ever learn in what part of the world the Russian empire lay, what was her population, what were her chief cities, what her rivers and mountains, and lastly but not least, what her products and exports?"

"Hang it, I don't see your drift."

"I wish to know a few of the exports."

"Oh! well, wheat, flax and leather. Will that do?"

I laughed. "An excellent memory. Go on."

"Ahem! Potash, Tallow——."

"Stop! Have you heard that word before?"

"Tallow, mysterious man, what do you mean?"

"I mean that Mr. Sturge talks about Russian affairs because he is interested in them, because he deals largely in the exports, and because——."

"I see! because he is the tallow-factor forsooth! But why should your perceptive faculties light upon Mr. Sturge, pray?"

"Simply because I recollected when you said something this morning about the Sturges knowing of you in Rustleton, that Miss S. when she wrote to me in *re* the burglary business hinted some acquaintance on the part of one of their family with Mrs. D."

"Phew! then do you think that Lil——."

"No, she has a sister."

"Yes, one *I've* not seen, and supposing she is like—like——."

"Like Lilian you would say. And if so you would fall in love with her instead. I thought you were not charmed with the miniature!"

He stared full at me, and then changed colour.

"What do you know," he said.

"That you are at present in love with Lilian Sturge, but now that you know your money is likely to go to her sister, you would prefer to make love to her instead."

"Never," he cried.

"But the thought struck you," said I. "Come!"

"Perhaps, but never again. I love now, but——."

"But what?"

"A great deal, but what am I to do?"

"Do? Common sense should tell you that when a man falls in love with a woman he knows it is either a light or a serious feeling. If the former, he thinks little about it; if the latter—well, he generally goes further."

"Splendid reasoning, my Plato! but suppose a man is in love with a *girl*?" I eyed him slowly from head to heel. "Call yourself a man?" said I, smilingly.

"Well, hang it, what did you call yourself when you were twenty-one?"

"A youth, sir! Man is experienced, has seen the world, can battle with life; a youth is vaguely struggling upward, has much before him, and is still green and fickle."

"Do you presume——."

"I presume nothing, you are head over heels, shall I say, in love with Miss Lilian. Good. She is four or five years younger than you, and consequently has four or five years less experience. You have possibly been in love before." He winced and stuck his hands in his pockets.

"One generally knows one's own mind when one is of age," he said.

"Good again, grant that you do. She has the sentimental period of life before her, and may probably find someone she will love better. Besides you have no proof that you have not a rival. There are plenty of these about, I've no doubt. London life means society."

He started and then smiled sorrowfully.

"I may have rivals in due time, but she is too young yet; there is the difficulty, she does not see things as I do, and if I commenced to talk sentiment, she would laugh at me. She has not learnt to love as I love." He spoke passionately.

"I believe you," returned I, "and if you would have her love you, you must teach her. A woman who is to be won must first be wooed. And there are many ways of wooing." Just then we saw the other three advancing towards us. "Please give me my mackintosh, Mr. Douglas," said Lilian, "a shower's coming." And then we hurried in.

The shower proved to be a thunderstorm, and so we sat round the window and watched the lightning playing with the waves. As twilight closed in, the storm ceased, and then Jack, opening the casement to admit the evening breeze, politely requested his cousin to favour us with something on the piano. Unlike those apparently utterly nervous and scrupulous maidens, who are not in "good form," or "have a cold," or would "rather be excused," Lilian rose at once and seated herself at the instrument. "What shall I play," said she. No one replied for a moment, then Jack broke silence. "The audience is content to leave the arrangement of a programme to the principal performer." She had buried her head in her hands as if thinking. Suddenly her fingers touched the keys and sounded a prolonged chord. Again another. And then as if they were a mighty flood of ocean

waves rolling and tossing upon the sand, the notes followed one another in a weird and grand strain of harmony. Higher and higher, reaching to the stars, grasping at things unearthly and unseen, then lower and lower, touching the heart, sinking in sadness into the soul. I noticed our hero rise and lean over the piano to listen, at the same time looking with delight at Lilian. Softly, in perfect time and sweetness, the performer ended her task.

"Oh! what a glorious thing," exclaimed Jack's sister, who had hitherto remained very silent.

"What was it Lil?" cried Jack.

"Guess."

"Impossible."

"Well, I don't know myself."

"Ahem! coming out as a composer, eh! Shall I name it for you?" cried Jack.

"Not at all," she answered, "it was an old piece of German music I bought at a bookstall."

"Sounds like Chopin, don't you think, Mr. Oakburne; or what do you say, Douglas, you ought to know?"

I admitted my inferior judgement, and Bonnie smiled.

"Don't you see, Mr. Oakburne," cried Lilian, "Jack's only making fun, I don't believe he knows a note of music?"

"Excuse me, young lady," said that person, "a poet is allowed to be, and always is, of a melodious turn of mind; now I wouldn't mind proving that."

"Do Jack, there's a good boy;" and turning over the music she produced a song, "here's one of your sort!"

The "one of his sort" turned out to be "Tom Bowling." So Jack, poet and philosopher, was obliged to become *à la* Sims Reeves, Jack the tenor. "I really cannot sing," said Jack meekly.

"You must now," said his sister, and so we had him at our mercy. I can't say much for Mr. Jack's voice, but his expression was all that could be desired, and the beautiful ballad proved as effective and touching in his rendering, as though we had been listening to a St. James's Hall "Star."

"I am very fond of that song," said Bonnie, as Jack sat down, "it is one of the finest ever written."

"A great deal of one's liking depends on the circumstances under which one first hears the song," said I.

It was midnight when we broke up the party and went to bed.

To be continued.

OUR BONNIE.

A ROMANCE, BY HERBERT OAKBURNE.

CHAPTER VII.

REVELATIONS.

EARLY next morning, as I walked on the Hotel Terrace, I met Miss Lilian. Taking my hand, she said hurriedly, "May I have a few minutes private conversation with you, Mr. Oakburne?" "Certainly," I replied. "It is nothing very particular, only I'd rather ask you the question. You know Mr. Douglas well, do you not?" continued my fair questioner. "Yes," said I.

"Do you know if he expected an aunt to leave him a legacy?"

"I think he did," I replied, puzzled.

"My reason for asking will be evident when you have read this, that is, if I may trouble you to do so."

She handed me a letter with a part turned down and marked. It was written in a lady's small hand. "With pleasure," I replied, "If I can be of any service to you." And I read the following:—

"Such a curious coincidence! I received a long letter from Mrs. Douglas, of Rustleton, this morning, the old lady, you remember, that I met last year. She says she feels she is failing in health, and wishes me to know she is going to leave me a handsome fortune in return for my attention to her. This is strange, considering I have done nothing to deserve such a reward. But the strangest part to come is that she appears to have very cruelly treated a nephew who lives in London, and who, to my thinking, is none other than the Mr. Douglas whom you talked about, that visited you so often. If he be the nephew, the legacy that she leaves me really belongs to him. As I do not like the idea of having money that is the lawful property of someone else,—altho' the old lady has a perfect right to do what she likes with it—will you try to find out if this Mr. Douglas is the same as I fancy him to be. You told me he came from the neighbourhood of Rustleton, and was very reticent on points relating to his family, &c., or I should not be so suspicious. Had I seen him for myself I should be better able to judge." I folded up the letter and returned it. My interrogator must have read confirmation of the news in my face, for she exclaimed in her girlish way, "Poor fellow, and to think of his slaving away in London. But why was it? She does not say."

Of a sudden our natures had grown sympathetic, and we each felt for our friend. "It was owing to my friend's resistance to some matrimonial plans concocted by his aunt," I replied, "I know of nothing else."

She was silent and then thanking me hastened indoors. At that moment Bonnie came up with a paper in his hand. I could see that he was agitated about something.

"It's all over, old man," he cried nervously. "Look at this." It was a telegram stating that Mrs. Douglas was dead, and telling him to return at once. "And I was just about to write and explain to her about—about—Lilian's sister—you know—"

"It cannot be helped now," I said, "but if you want your inheritance back there is an opportunity, I believe."

"I don't care for a farthing, so long as I get what I want more." And that was Lilian Sturge.

They were standing together alone at the farthest point of the beach under the rocks, Bonnie and Lilian.

"I am going to Rustleton to-morrow," said he, "by the first train."

She started. "Why run away so soon?"

"I am obliged. My aunt is dead."

She looked up quickly. "Indeed! I—I—" She hesitated, and looked at him confused.

"I never told you I had an aunt, do you mind?"

"Oh, no, I—." Again she hesitated.

"Lilian, before I go there is one thing I want to say—to you—. Do you remember—that day in the abbey—I looked at you—"

"Oh, yes," do you bear me any malice?" She smiled, and looking up caught his earnest gaze, then blushed.

"You don't know why I ask you, why I remember—Lilian!—"

He caught her hand and she laughed softly—"Mr. Douglas, how well you act! supposing a big wave were to come up and drench us, shouldn't we run, and wouldn't it damp some of that theatrical sentiment?" She was chattering away merrily and half sarcastically.

He stammered, "Lilian, you mistake me, I am in earnest,—I mean that I love you, have loved you ever since that day, but—"

She turned pale and stepped back from him. He paused.

"You doubt me, you think I do not mean it—you do not care for me?"

She held out her hand and he took it wildly.

"I am sorry for this," said she, "almost—I thought you were joking—I did not know you loved me like that—for—for—I cannot—do not know what I can do—I am afraid I could not love you as you would like."

The wild girl had all at once become the gentle, sympathetic woman.

"But you can love me a little, can try to—you will be my friend?" He still held her hand, and waited her reply.

"Always if you wish, but I cannot promise more. I am only a girl," she murmured.

He clasped her to him in a moment of weakness, and instinctively their eyes and then their lips met. But one kiss, a pledge of friendship. It was the first and last.

The same evening, news reached the Sturges that Mrs. and Miss Emilie Sturge had met with a serious accident whilst driving out in the park.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BRACELET.

THE telegram that brought the news of the accident to Mrs. and Miss Sturge (Lilian's sister) proved to be of more importance than was at first supposed. The facts were these. Returning from a drive in an open carriage, the ladies had been thrown out under the feet of the horses of a passing vehicle, owing to the coachman's careless driving round the corner of the road. Mrs. Sturge, fortunately, was more

frightened than hurt, but Miss Sturge, being severely injured, was carried home insensible, and the next day died. The yachting party was thus suddenly broken up, and Lilian was only just in time to see her sister for the last time. It was a sad thing for the family, and a strange event in the eyes of Bonnie and I, who regarded it as a stroke of Providence. The mournful news did not reach us until Bonnie, as executor for Mrs. Douglas, applied to Miss Sturge, a legatee, to whom Mrs. D., in a codicil, had bequeathed a large portion of her fortune. As there was no provision (curiously enough) made in case of Miss Sturge's decease, the fortune would have reverted to our hero, but that an uncle from Scotland sent in a claim for his share of it. Frank told us that Mr. Wormage had written and advised his uncle because he had a prejudice against Bonnie. He (Mr. W.) had no need to have done so, for he was well provided for by the late Mrs. Douglas. However, now the case was being settled in Chancery, and Bonnie had gone to London about it. We had seen nothing of the Sturges since that eventful morning at B—. Mrs. Sturge and Lilian had gone to the south of France, whence, Bonnie said, she was going with her cousin into Germany, to study music.

* * * * *

London in December. A cold, misty night. Bonnie was wandering aimlessly up the Whitechapel Road, merely indulging in his old passion for studying life in its variety of forms. The neighbourhood was bright with the glare of naphtha lamps that flickered and hissed over "Cheap Jacks" stalls. Crowds of people swarmed round dirty barrows, which were laden with mouldy books of the "highest class of litricher," and groaned under piles of crockery of all sorts and descriptions. The whole street was in an uproar. Labouring men, and dirty women, lounging good-for-nothings and busy marketers, hustled and jostled one another on the pavements, whistling and chattering, swearing and arguing, all helping to make the scene one of lively interest.

As he passed by a narrow court a short greasy-looking man laid his hand on his arm, "Ho, Mr. De Turney, yer don't know me, I s'pose."

Bonnie started, amazed.

"He! he! wot a good 'un yer was not for to come back, but yer don't come over me yer don't."

"I think, my man," said Bonnie, turning to go, "you have made a mistake."

"He! he! yer don't 'my man' me, yer don't; come I say 'ave it square, wot's yer a-going to giv' us for that 'ere,—yer know?"

"I tell you I don't know what you are talking about," cried Bonnie.

The man had seized his arm.

"And if you don't let go I will give you into custody."

"He! he! wot me? Wot your friend Bill as 'elped you to do the job. And where'd you be, eh? Wy, I should say to the peeler, I should, 'This 'ere's the man wot stole that young 'ooman's bracelet at Clapham, I should."

Bonnie started again, and a thought seemed to strike him.

"Ha! that settles yer, don't it?" exclaimed the greasy party.

Laughing and assuming a kind of swaggering air, our hero returned, "Indeed! and what about it?"

"Oh! you don't know, do yer; you never promised for to tip me, you never! oh, no! and then hooked it to Paris and giv' it to the Injun for fifty quid, oh no! I never heerd, did I? and now if you don't make it square I'm a-going in for the reward; look 'ere, see this paper?"

It was a bill offering £60 reward to the finder of the bracelet or the discoverer of the thief. Bonnie clutched it eagerly.

"And did I tell you whom I was going to sell it to?" said he carefully and in an assumed voice.

"You sed as you was goin' to giv' it to the Injun in Rudem-suthing street, I can't say them forrin words myself, but I knows the 'ouse, an' I know as you sold 'im it, fur Phil Blockeys was over larst week and he—and he—why—it aint him by—." The man had turned and fled with an oath. Bonnie cried "stop him, he's a thief," and tore along vainly searching for the incautious law-breaker.

A crowd of low persons had gathered round and some were following and laughing at his excitement. And then a policeman appeared on the scene, to whom he described the man and bade him secure him as an accomplice in the Clapham burglary. Thus it will be seen, this matter had not yet been sifted and settled.

It was only because he had drawn near to a gas lamp and allowed the light to fall on his face accidentally, that the man had discovered his error.

Why was this likeness? Why had fate stamped a resemblance on his face to a felon, a common burglar? Ah! why had he come to London at all? he said to me when he narrated this experience.

And the greasy little man had not yet been captured.

CHAPTER IX.

"ADIEU! ADIEU!"

It is night in Paris. Rue d' E—— is not one of the cleanest and brightest of streets at the best of times, and to-night it is, if anything, dirtier and darker than it has been for some time. I cannot say why. Perhaps Heaven is frowning upon the wicked inhabitants, displeased with their deceit and violence. Very few persons frequent the Rue d' E——, it is known as a bad neighbourhood. But to-night a stranger carefully wends his way along its pavement, excitedly looking at every shop he passes, and occasionally glancing at a slip of paper he carries in his left hand. "No," he mutters, "it cannot be far from here. Engine is the name, known, so the officer said, as "the Injun." If I had only caught the greasy one, I might have found my fellow likeness . . . n' importe . . . I will do the deed myself. . . . Lilian shall know . . . Hallo! here's the identical." He stops before a low doorway. "Numero quatorze, yes this is it; now, is that officer behind?" He looks back and catches sight of a black cloak pacing up and down at the top of the street. All is quiet. No one is about. (Ah! if he could only see across the road, where a figure crouches beneath a window!) People are gone to bed, but a light burns over the door of No. 40. Bonnie, for it is he, rings softly.

"Que voulez-vous?" cries a voice from within, after a moment or two.

"Be quick!" cries Bonnie; "I have something for you." The door opens slightly, and a crooked little man peeps out.

"Ha! you Englees, vat you vant? you will be always for getting me into trouble."

"You will not get into trouble; I only want your help."

"Ha! you Englees, you are always for wanting help. I haf no monish, you make une grande faute."

Bonnie holds up a finger and puts his foot inside the doorway. He is admitted.

"See this," he whispers, holding out the paper; "you can if you

help me, get a reward of 1,000 francs, and I will give you another thousand if you will —"

"Vill what? I haf noting to help you."

"Hush! listen! don't you remember a man—an Englishman like me, look!—coming to sell you a bracelet?"

"Ha! vat you say, un bracelet?"

"Yes, some months ago, tell me, have you got it now?"

"Now. . . . Haf I got it now? You are alone?"

Bonnie steps to the door. "No, but if you will tell me truthfully, I will promise you nothing shall happen to you."

The old man beckons with his finger. "Come into ma chambre, m'sieur; Ha! the door is still open!" He turns to shut the door, and before doing so peers out into the street. Doing so he is seized violently and thrown into the passage, a man springs in, and before the Jew can call out or Bonnie can speak, a pistol is fired, and the intruder is gone. The black cloak is on the spot in a moment, bending over the prostrate form of Boniface Douglas. Another officer appears to the call of a shrill whistle, and in ten minutes the whole neighbourhood is roused. The same night the assassin, who proves to be the accomplice in the Clapham burglary, is arrested by the Parisian police, to whom also Joel Engfme delivers up the lost bracelet.

In a well-furnished apartment at the Hotel —, Bonnie lay undergoing surgical treatment. The surgeons doubted whether the bullet could be abstracted, and the case was considered hopeless.

Ethel sat by the bedside nursing him. I had brought her with me, for when she heard the news from me she seemed as if she would rather die than be left behind. The patient was still very weak from loss of blood, and now and again delirious. It was the second day after the attempted assassination. He was raving and calling for Lilian, repeatedly declaring that he was only shewing her that he could love, and then crying that she did not care for him; she was making fun of him; why did she go and leave him, &c. And all the time Ethel was sitting, calm and pale, wondering and fearing, holding his hand in hers and trying to sooth him.

In one of his conscious hours he asked to speak to me alone. "Herbert," he murmured, "we are old . . . old friends . . . aren't we?" I assented. "And you know . . . know my secrets." He smiled faintly. "You know too . . . perhaps I shall . . . I shall die . . . I don't mind . . . it may be best . . . but tell . . . Lilian . . . tell her . . . why . . . how . . . oh! this pain . . . if I had not . . . gone to London . . . I should never . . . seen her . . . but now . . . I love her . . . always would . . . if I lived . . . Ethel is good . . . isn't she . . . but . . . isn't Lilian coming?" Then he sank down exhausted, and commencing to wander in his mind, now called for help, and now declared he had found the bracelet and would not be suspected again. All this was very painful and could not last long, we knew. Mr. Sturge had been sent for, and he agreed with me that it would be unwise to send for Lilian, or to inform her of the news at present. Had we done so then there would have been no time for her to come. The next evening Bonnie sank into a quiet sleep. About midnight he turned round and opened his eyes, "I think I will get up," he said, quite naturally, and tried to rise. Ethel laid her hand on his shoulder and begged him to lie still. Then she called the physician, who called me. . . . He looked at us as if puzzled. "She is not here . . . why doesn't she come . . . I can hear her playing . . . hark! . . . what music is it? . . . I wish I could sing." I took his hand and knelt down by his side.

Ethel bent over him and placed her soft hand on his forehead. "Yes, you have always . . . always been kind . . . to me . . . Ethel . . . and we shall meet again . . . Oh! what's that! . . . Mo ———."

Darken the rooms and the windows. Close the Chancery suit. Write in the register that a human creature has departed this life. Mourn the deeds of murderers and evil-doers; tell the tale in the newspapers; sigh over it in secret, and then forget all about it.

Lilian Sturge had read in a French paper of the assassination and come post-haste to Paris. Too late! "Why did you not send for me?" she cried, through her tears. And bending with Ethel over the lifeless form of Our Bonnie, the two sobbing women learnt the truth that both had loved, both had lost, and both had been loved.

CHAPTER X.

CONCLUSION.

Romance is pleasing or pathetic. Why should my hero die? Because it was not in the extraordinary course of events for him to live. Had he remained at home, stuck to a quiet country life, and not flirted with Miss Nellie Lorrimer, the virtuous ire of Jonas Wormage would not have been roused, Mrs. Douglas would not have changed her tactics, and Bonnie would not have gone to London as he did. Had he not thus gone, he would probably not have been arrested on suspicion, have formed the acquaintance of Lillian Sturge, and fallen in love with her.

Had he not loved her very dearly, he would not have set out on the mad adventure which resulted so fatally. And, above all, had he set his mind on some one object in life, and striven with all his power to achieve honour and fame in some one profession, he would not have found time to throw away on what was not helping to form him into a sensible member of society. You may say he was frivolous and thoughtless, and had no life purpose. But if you do so, you must condemn yourselves. You must remember he was young, and depended on a fortune that someone had made for him to live on, and recollecting this, you can only sigh and remark what many a one has done before you, "Such is life!" and "Such is the way of the world!"

And what of our other characters? Ethel Berrington still lives with her father. She is known to all Rusleton for her kindness of heart and generosity, and it is rumoured that a young curate from Scotland is very attentive to her. Ah! these Scotch! Frank Fairmount is in London, and expects soon to be called to the bar. He seems to have quite forgotten Nellie Lorrimer, for as he told me the other day he didn't trouble his head about girls, he got on much better without them. And I couldn't help thinking he was right, for if a fellow is to make headway in his profession, he must leave love-making until he is in a position to spare plenty of time for it. Nellie has removed with her mother to a neighbouring town, and I expect has by this time banished all recollection of Bonnie from her mind. If what I hear is true, she is as big a coquette as ever. So shall she go the way of all flirts!

John Sturge, senior, declared that the finding of the bracelet was an unlucky omen, for shortly afterwards he failed in his business speculations for a considerable sum. But he was never of a despairing disposition, and is rapidly regaining his position. And what shall I tell of her who is assisting him! Lilian! What memories are associated with that name? Last winter I attended a concert in St. James' Hall. Among the *artistes* was Miss Lilian Sturge, who played a pianoforte solo. And well did she deserve the loud applause of the crowded audience. I saw

her afterwards and shook her hand. "You have chosen your career," I said. She smiled, "Music is Divine," Mr. Oakburne, "and therefore everlasting; I think we are agreed on that point . . . I live for music, because I love it."

I fancy my reader is inclined to say "Pooh! it's only a moral tale!" Be it so! but I deliver no stated moral. If I *must* speak, let me tell you that if ever you are touched by love's arrows, the brooding over the fact will not hasten your success or gild your hopes. Live well while you can, for doing one's duty amounts to more than merely obeying one's impulse. Some people are too sentimental; it is not wrong to be so, let us strike a happy medium, for feelings that are honourable and right, when allied to noble purposes will be sure to win us success.

BATTLE SONG.

To our arms! to our arms! let our weapons be bright,
To our arms! to our arms! for the foe is in sight;
Like dust on the highway our enemy comes,
Mount! mount! and make ready! be sounded the drums.

Haste! haste! set our forces in battle array!
The moon ere her waning shall witness the fray!
Awake, ye dull sleepers when glory is near,
How yield to repose, or contemptible fear?

Think not, haughty spoilers, our force to deride,
For soon shall it humble the crest of your pride;
Ere morning your host shall be scattered and slain,
Your boasting exchanged for the moaning of pain.

No more shall our country in agony weep
O'er villages wasted, her children's last sleep,
In Providence trusting, we'll fall on the foe,
Hark! the shout for the battle, up! up! let us go!

M. S. WICKSON.